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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [EINV](#) [RW](#)
SUBJECT: RWANDA JOINS COMMONWEALTH

¶1. (U) Summary: On November 28th, Commonwealth heads of government meeting in Trinidad and Tobago decided to admit Rwanda as their group's newest member. Although concrete benefits to membership appear modest, Rwandan officials anticipate expanded business and trade opportunities and welcome the opportunity to join another regional grouping that embraces globalization, trade and economic integration.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Rwandan Foreign Minister Rosemary Museminali told the local press November 29th that Rwanda is "looking forward to working with our new partner states to strengthen economic, trade, cultural and political ties" and affirmed Rwanda's commitment to contribute to the group's aspirations including promoting peace and prosperity in the region. Rwanda's formally launched its bid to join the Commonwealth in 2007, supported by the UK, Australia, Canada, India, South Africa, as well as its East African neighbors Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

¶3. (SBU) The Commonwealth is a club of 54 nations with a population of more than two billion and \$2.8 trillion in annual trade. Rwanda is only the second country, after Mozambique, to join the organization without having a British colonial past or constitutional link to Britain. In addition to potential trade, business linkages and economic benefits, UK poloff explained to us that by joining the Commonwealth, Rwanda could more easily access technical assistance programs offered by Commonwealth professional associations and NGOs. A variety of scholarship programs benefiting Commonwealth members would also become available, the poloff added.

¶4. (U) Comment: Rwanda's successful bid to join the Commonwealth is consistent with its ambition to become a regional trade hub, broaden its economic base through regional integration and attract new investment by building partnerships with larger trading blocks. Senior Rwandan leaders have also pointed out that joining the Commonwealth is not incompatible with continued membership in Francophonie, the association of French-speaking countries, and that they intend to remain part of that grouping as well.

End Comment.
SYMINGTON